



On the road to Beijing

Freewinds cruise ship hosts a successful fundraising concert for Aruba's special athletes

This past Saturday it was a full house in the nightclub of the Freewinds cruise ship for song stylist Debby Beaujon of Curacao and the Freewinds band. The Freewinds often hosts benefit concerts starring some fine international talent for worthy causes at a number of their regular ports of call and kindly volunteered their facilities in raising funds to send Aruba's special athletes to the International Special Olympics to take place in Beijing, China in November of this year.

Arturo Werleman, Director of the Foundation for the Mentally Challenged of Aruba, and head of the Foundation Special Olympics acted as Master of Ceremonies and reports that the "house was sold out, and returns were way beyond anything we had expected." Many Aruban companies purchased multiple tickets for their staff, and donated funds above the ticket price, such as Bright Bakery, which made a contribution of 15,000 Aruban Florins (\$8,575.) towards seeing the team of eight athletes travel to China.

Joining Debby Beaujon in performing was local singing artist Mark Gonzalez, who is part of "the team." Mark also did a solo performance of a song call "Mi Ta Bo Ruman," a song Arturo Werleman had requested noted local performer and composer Edwin Abath to create in 1991. The title means, "I am your brother," and expresses the feelings and struggle of the mentally challenged to be accepted and treated normally. Arturo told the audience that it had been his dream for years that there would be someone to sing it, and finally "God gave us the miracle of Mark."

Additionally performing was the Aruban dance group "Flash," who joined Mark and Debby on stage as they performed a duet for the grand finale of "Carina di Wowo," made famous by noted Curacao songstress Izaline Callister. It was a rousing end to a wonderful concert that had the audience on their feet shouting "Bravo!"

The evening ended with gifts of thank you from the staff of the Special Olympics committee and team members to Debby, the Freewinds band, and crew for the wonderful evening of music and community unity.